

U.S. MARSHALS SERVICE ANNIVERSARY

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, I wish to honor the U.S. Marshals Service on the occasion of the 225th anniversary of its founding. Since its establishment in 1789, the Marshals Service has distinguished itself as not only the oldest, but one of the most effective law enforcement agencies in the United States. In recent years, the Marshals Service has demonstrated its versatility through Operation FALCON, a nationwide fugitive apprehension initiative. In this program, resources of Federal, State, city, and county law enforcement agencies are combined to locate and apprehend criminals wanted for crimes of violence. Since its inception in 2005, Operation FALCON has made 91,086 arrests and cleared 117,874 warrants and is the single most successful initiative aimed at apprehending violent fugitives in U.S. law enforcement history. Congratulations to the Marshals Service on 225 years of service to our Nation.

MCDONALD NOMINATION

• Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, my office continues to receive an inordinate number of complaints about persistent problems with the delivery of health care services and other benefits by the Department of Veterans Affairs to those who have served in our Armed Forces. This is very troubling to me.

Evidence of serious and systemic mismanagement and negligence within the Department led to the resignation of a former Secretary of the Department and a call for a thorough assessment of how to better serve our veterans. We should take very seriously our responsibility to those who have served in our military. Robert McDonald, the next Secretary of Veterans Affairs, will face many challenges to improve the VA system. He will have the support of many of us in Congress as he assumes this important position.

I have recommended on several occasions continued, vigorous oversight by the Department of Veterans Affairs during the implementation of a corrective action plan at the G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery VA Medical Center in Jackson, MS. Reports from VA patients, their families and VA hospital officials in Mississippi have served to guide corrections and improvements at the facility.

I support measures to correct the VA's problems and improve the quality of, and access to, care for veterans. I am hopeful that the pending VA reform legislation and the confirmation of a new Secretary of Veterans Affairs will be reassuring steps toward enhancing the delivery of health care services to our veterans.

We can and should do better for those who have devoted themselves to serving our country. •

REMEMBERING ADMIRAL CHARLES R. LARSON

Mr. MCCAIN. Mr. President, today I want to pay tribute to an exceptional leader, public servant, patriot, and friend. Earlier this week, ADM Charles Larson passed away after a 2-year battle against leukemia. This morning, we said goodbye to him as he was memorialized and laid to rest at the U.S. Naval Academy Cemetery in Annapolis. Although it is always hard to lose a friend, and it is certainly proper to mourn, I also want to celebrate his life and his tremendous accomplishments and contributions to the Navy, Naval Academy, and Nation.

Chuck and I were good friends, flight school roommates, and both members of the Class of 1958. An Eagle Scout, brigade commander and class president, he continued his meteoric trajectory, becoming the first naval officer selected as a White House Fellow and the second youngest officer to be promoted to the flag rank. On top of his operational commands, he also served as naval aide to President Richard Nixon. Chuck was bright, extremely talented, and never shied away from a challenge. For instance, after earning his pilot wings and doing a tour aboard the USS *Shangri-la*, he decided to go to nuclear power school to become a submariner and be at the tactical tip of the Cold War. Similarly, instead of pursuing a lucrative civilian job after finishing his tour as the commander in chief, U.S. Pacific Command, he took on what he considered his most challenging but rewarding job of his career, returning to his alma mater for a second tour as the superintendent.

A man of unparalleled character and vision, Admiral Larson wanted to refocus the academy to be "an ethical beacon for the nation." He established the Character Development Division and implemented innovative ethical and character-enhancing programs and initiatives to both the curriculum and student life. His devotion to the academy and midshipmen went beyond his two tenures at the helm, serving as the chairman of the U.S. Naval Academy Foundation for nearly a decade after his retirement.

Chuck was more than a renowned four-star admiral; he was a friend to many, husband to Sally, father to Sigrid, Erica, and Kirsten, and grandfather to seven beautiful children. I join many past and present members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Class of 1958, the Naval Academy family, and thousands of military personnel who have served under and alongside Chuck in extending our most sincere gratitude for his legacy of excellence and ethical leadership.

Fair winds and following seas, Admiral Larson. You will be missed, but not forgotten.

INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I wish to express my appreciation that the Sen-

ate has passed H.R. 4028, a bipartisan bill Representatives GRACE MENG and DOUG COLLINS introduced that amends the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to include the desecration of cemeteries among the many forms of violations of the right to religious freedom. Last month, Senator RISCH and I introduced a Senate companion bill, S. 2466, to H.R. 4028.

In 1998, Congress passed the International Religious Freedom Act to affirm America's commitment to religious freedom, enshrined both in the U.S. Constitution and in numerous international human rights instruments. The act acknowledges the pressure and persecution that many people around the world face because of their religious beliefs and requires the Department of State to issue an annual report on international religious freedom.

Freedom of religion requires respect for those practicing their faith alone as well as in community with others. It also requires protection for those who identify as members of a religious community, for the symbols of the community, for the houses of worship, and for other institutions of the community. The defacing or destruction of a cemetery based on an affiliation with a particular religious or spiritual group should not be tolerated by governments and must factor into our international religious freedom reporting. This bill, H.R. 4028, will ensure inclusion of these acts in the annual State Department reports and will better aid those of us working to monitor and combat anti-Semitism and other religious discrimination.

There is no question that we need to report on these crimes. In recent years, we have witnessed with growing concern a number of cases involving the desecration of Jewish cemeteries in the Netherlands, Hungary, Russia, Poland, France, Germany, Georgia, Moldova, and Argentina. This legislation is even more important and timely given the rise in anti-Semitism across Europe. In just the past few weeks, large-scale anti-Semitic protests have taken place in major cities across Europe. In this year's European Union elections, extremist parties espousing anti-Semitic platforms have made alarming progress. And in Hungary and Greece, extremist parliamentary parties associated with street militias have been successful in elections.

I have served on the Helsinki Commission for nearly 20 years. During my tenure, I have worked tirelessly to combat anti-Semitism and religious discrimination. Ensuring that religiously motivated cemetery desecration is reported is the first important step to combating this serious crime.

I thank Senator RISCH for his leadership on this issue. I also thank Senators MENENDEZ and CORKER for taking up H.R. 4028 and moving it quickly through the Senate Foreign Relations